

VII

ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

I spent my next two years doing my Intermediate at St Joseph's College, a place I knew well from years of earlier trudging past it four times a day between home and school. It had been started at St John's Hill in 1882 as an extension of the school, which, on that account, had long been known simply as "College". Both had moved six years later to a portion of the old Residency compound bounded by Museum and Residency Road, where the foundations of the present building were laid in 1923. It was a two-storeyed block of dressed granite, a material then cheap enough to be used for many of Bangalore's handsome buildings, and possibly quarried from the very rocks in whose hollows I used to swim as a boy. It overlooked Bishop Cotton's Girls School and also the old Imperial (now State) Bank of India which still boasted a stained-glass skylight showing the Royal Coat of Arms, a reminder of the time it housed the actual Residency. It had been built in a corner of the grounds of the High School which had retained most of the land for itself, so, like the Indian Section that stood at another corner, it had to make do with open space elsewhere for its own playing-field. This was more than a mile away in what was once known as the Survey Grounds but is now Wilson Gardens. There thus appeared little room for it to expand on its existing site, but this difficulty was soon to be overcome.

During the six months I had been away, the Paris Foreign Mission that had run the three institutions for decades had handed them over to the Society of Jesus. All the old French and Swiss priests I had known were gone, their places taken mostly by Italians. True to their deserved renown for higher education, the Jesuits set about changing the face of the campus within the limited space available. They soon put up a third storey topped by an observatory

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with a telescope, built a room for a seismograph, and constructed a completely new science block where once had stood the old Brothers House and tennis court that the school no longer needed. They also put up a new block, a replica of the old and parallel to it, on a strip of land sold to them by Bishop Cotton's Girls, a gesture of co-operation well before ecumenism had become popular, and with these extensions they were able to start new courses and take in more students. It had long been a co-educational college (my sister Win had done her BA there five years earlier), and though most of the women students were still Anglo-Indian, the majority of the men were from other communities. Even so, Anglo-Indians continued to dominate the field of sport, except when I narrowly missed the high jump in my first year due to my ignorance of the rule relating to tied jumps. The next year I took care to study the rule, passed the earlier jumps, and won the event by jumping higher anyway.

My two years in the Inter were a breeze - and almost a waste. The subjects I chose were maths and science, of which, with the exception of physics, I learnt only a little more than I had already been taught. Apart from getting the better of the subject that had earlier eluded me, my main advances were in algebra, geometry and chemistry. I covered the same ground in trigonometry as in High School, where I had already had a sound start, and found language and literature easy, for English was my mother tongue and my strongest subject and I had already had six years of French. In the event, I passed my finals with an overall first - no great achievement, for it was as much a case of consolidation as of acquisition of new knowledge.

Madras University, to which the college was affiliated and which prescribed our curriculum, could have given us credit for being able to absorb something more. We were never told that there were geometries other than Euclid, and even the elements of subjects like calculus and astronomy remained closed books to us. Our broad acquaintance with the basics of science could, for instance, have been enhanced by a closer look at the atom, and if I heard of electrons and protons, of isotopes and carbon-dating, or of the scientific method

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itself, for that matter, it was through my own reading, and certainly never in class. We had, after all, gone to college not merely to pass an examination but to widen our knowledge and to gain an education in the best sense of the word. In my case I admit that there was also a practical side, for I had by then made up my mind to make a career in one or other of the superior Indian services, as my elder brothers had done. For this I would have to rank high in a stiff service commission examination in which the best brains in the country competed. Apart from a thorough proficiency in one's own special subjects, a sound general knowledge and a more than passing acquaintance with current affairs would be called for, and in the time spent going over subjects already done in school, it would have been easy enough to fit in an initiatory lecture or two on subjects outside the curriculum such as anthropology, psychology and the natural and social sciences. An introduction to Darwin, Marx and Freud, basic for anyone wishing to be well-informed, might not have been too much to expect even then in a Catholic college. In the event, I was left to explore all these on my own.

We were not, of course, confined strictly to our curriculum. Our Science Association managed to invite a few eminent lecturers from outside, and no one who was interested failed to attend an absorbing talk on the dispersion of light, accompanied by some simple experiments, by Sir C V Raman, Nobel Laureate and then Director of the prestigious Tata Institute of Science. (It is now the Indian Institute of Science from which our younger son got his degree in engineering more than thirty years later.) I also remember a talk organised by the Political Science Association on Indian Federation, a highly topical subject just then, for it was at the core of the new Government of India Act of 1935 that was to form the basis of the country's future constitution. Parts of it had recently come into force in the provinces and at the centre, but the princely states had balked at joining, and the speaker seemed at pains to excuse their reluctance. It was a reluctance they were later persuaded to overcome after independence, but it is doubtful if they had come in before it would have saved the country from partition, given the stubbornness of

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Jinnah and the Muslim League who succeeded in carving out their own state of Pakistan.

I was able to broaden my mind in other ways too. Personal contact with cultured and educated Indians of other communities, begun during my recent tour of the country, continued to give me a new view of other Indians, their thinking and their attitudes, and especially of their claim for independence. Closer to home, it showed me how isolated and hence ignorant and prejudiced we Anglo-Indians had allowed ourselves to remain, how bereft of any sense of patriotism we were, and how necessary it was for us to change our attitude to India and our fellow Indians. This feeling was reinforced over the years by my own readings of Indian history and religion which helped to fill the gaps left by my earlier education.

I did not let my studies come in the way of my other activities. I made the college cricket XI, and besides many a pleasant local match in Bangalore's fine weather, I traveled with it to places like Madras, Palghat and Coimbatore to take part in the University's inter-collegiate tournaments. At Madras I met some of my future colleagues who were already at Loyola, including Sankaran ("Shunks") Nair (pronounced Nayar), my future batchmate in the Indian Police, and the two Dadabhai brothers, both of whom became fighter pilots and were killed flying against the Japanese over Burma. I continued with my athletics in which, in addition to my costly lesson in the rules of high jump, I made my first throw with the javelin, an event which I went on to win at the Madras Olympics in 1942. (To be fair, it should have been won by a rival who had consistently proved better than I in earlier meets, but was absent, ill, on the day.) We had no divisions such as seniors, juniors and sub-juniors in college athletics such as we had had in school, with the result that, hardly a year into college, I found myself competing against adults about to graduate and hence three to four years my senior. It was a substantial difference at that stage, and it was not surprising that I had to wait for my fifth and final year at university to repeat my school performance and win another championship. I tried my hand at tennis, for which I had a natural bent and which I

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enjoyed playing, but had to give it up all too soon due to chronic trouble with my wrist, making me largely a spectator thereafter. But to compensate, I pursued my other love, swimming, mainly on holiday afternoons in the many tanks and wells near Bangalore.

My activities were not exclusively outdoor. I still enjoyed acting, speaking and singing, and never failed to take part in college skits, plays and oratorical contests in which I did well, though strangely enough, they never completely cured me of stage-fright when it came to debating. Most enjoyable of all was our college quartet in which I sang bass. In this we were lucky to be led by my friend Bobby Nicholas. He was average in class but outstanding in everything else - games, athletics and especially music in which, though he had never studied a note, he could play the piano, organ, violin and guitar like a professional. He coached each of us in our parts until we were near-perfect. I also sang bass in the chapel choir along with two class-mates, Simon Furtado and Bob Colaco, both of whom later became Jesuits.

For lighter pastimes we had our usual dances, parties, picnics and, of course, the cinema. Our dances and musical evenings were sometimes held at the Bowring Institute, a somewhat snobbish place whose membership included a large proportion of "domiciled" types and Anglo-Indians who were well off, but not other Indians. As I was not a member, I had always to go as someone's guest for any functions held there, and it was always a disappointment not to be able to join the rest of our gang for the New Year's Eve dance for want of the required dress-suit. For smaller functions we went to the more homely St John's and All Saints Institutes located at opposite ends of Bangalore, or held them at each others houses where the drawing-rooms or gardens were big enough to fit us all in. Gramophone music, amplified through a radio (we had no separate "speakers" then) did for music at our house-parties, and there were always live bands to play fox-trots, quick-steps and waltzes, interspersed with the Lambeth Walk, Knees Up Mother Brown, Boomps-a-Daisy or the Valeta at our institute dances. I usually took the responsibility for arranging our picnics, for which Bangalore's

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weather and beauty spots were always an enticement. There would be the place to choose, a score of friends to inform, transport to arrange, subscriptions to collect and food to order. Our main dishes were invariably mutton pilau, chicken curry, tamarind chutney and brinjal (egg-plant) prepared the Muslim way, all bought from an eatery which knew me well enough to lend me its large utensils to take the food away. We took our own plates and spoons which we put to good use as soon as we finished our rambles and games, and there were always singsongs when going and coming. Saturday evenings were usually cinema time. With four theatres in the cantonment alone, there was no shortage of good films to give us healthy entertainment, with plenty of laughs and thrills and above all, memorable music. Good humour and light-hearted fun (without liquor) are what I recall most from this period of our teenage years, when jokes and laughter filled our verandahs or wherever we spent our time together. Though we sometimes flirted, and kissed when going “steady”, there was never any misbehaviour, for we were decent young people.

My group of friends was made up of three boys and three girls, one of them my future wife. Good family background, moral upbringing, self-respect, and a sense of propriety combined to ensure that nothing low or inelegant marred our relations. In fact, even in our exclusively male conversation we avoided vulgar language and lewd remarks, while a risqué joke had first of all to be essentially clever before it was cracked. Indecency, as commonly seen or heard today, was rigidly avoided. In short, our behaviour was gentlemanly - and ladylike - without being prudish or Victorian. We mixed clean fun with educated talk, discussing the light with the serious - good manners, right speech and even, as part of our mutual education, the correct meaning, spelling and pronunciation of novel words that we came across. (I remember “onomatopoeia” among them). We cheerfully picked each others brains and exchanged views about books we read and the news we heard, thus widening our knowledge and our acquaintance with current affairs. I was particularly interested in contemporary history, and helped by my mother’s endless clippings from newspapers and magazines, closely followed

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developments in Abyssinia, Spain and China where the fascist nations were trying out their power prior to the disastrous war that was soon to be upon us. Indian politics and the movement for independence continued to appear in a more favourable light. I was, in short, developing a world view.

We naturally indulged in tall talk at times, sometimes a little boastful and conceited, sometimes challenging, but always good-humoured and often with an underlying seriousness about life and what it was to hold for us. Jobs, even in government service, were not easily to be had in those days when the effects of the great depression were still with us, though the war was soon to change that almost overnight. The dole, especially for teenagers, was something unheard of in India then or even now, as was the provision of special accommodation for youths who could not stand living with their parents. (In fairness, we never heard of the sort of intolerable domestic strife and abuse one reads of in countries like the one I live in today.) No youth we knew of ever dreamed of leaving home before getting a job and being able to afford a place of his own. Until then, staying on as part of the family was the accepted and invariable rule. From all this there emerged a certain self-discipline and sense of purpose, a determination never to loaf or to sponge, but to improve oneself, make the best of one's gifts, and become someone in life. This development of character and direction of will served us well as we grew to manhood, for of our group of three, Ronnie Matthews became a doctor, Peter Newton an executive in Imperial Tobaccos, and I followed my brothers into the last of the imperial services. And I am sure that the traits developed during this period of my life gave me the right combination of qualities that went to make my career a happy one and to bring me the rewards of affection, recognition and respect that I valued infinitely more than the status and income that I ended with..

This was the time when I began to take a special and longing interest in clothes, of which Bangalore offered an excellent selection to suit every taste. But it was to be some time before I could indulge my urge to dress well, thanks to the endless supply of hand-me-

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downs from Cyril which, it must be admitted, made up for a somewhat acute shortage of cash in the family at the time. My eyes lingered on the endless displays of fabrics in the better shops in Commercial Street - fine cottons or the lighter woolens so suitable for Bangalore's mild and equable climate, with shirtings, ties and socks to match. At the age of sixteen I got my own first full-length suit, an ash-grey woolen with an invisible stripe, and the roll-collar that was then in fashion. It cost all of thirty rupees, and another five for shirt, tie and socks to match. Later I got a sports-coat and grey flannels which cost a bit more, but I had to wait until I drew my own salary years later before I got my first dress-suit which was *de rigueur* for young IP officers, even though we seldom wore it during the war and less so after independence which soon followed. I gave it away when I retired.

Even as I grew conscious of my clothes and my looks, I became aware of a different and wholly pleasurable interest in girls, whose special shape and attractions I had somehow only superficially noticed until then. Calf-love, of which I had had such wide, acute and unfulfilled experience, was now, it seemed, behind me. Adolescent dreams and fantasies apart, the meaningful business of selecting a future mate now arose. For a time this consisted mainly of reacting, and then reviewing my reaction, to every girl I saw, passed or met. The process was somewhat restricted by the fact that by then I was in a boarding-school surrounded by high walls that hardly facilitated such activity. However, this period did not last too long, for hardly six months out of school, I met my future wife and fell in love.

With no family home to go to on my return from Gorakhpur, I joined my sister Win, then teaching at Baldwin Girls, at our Aunt Winnie's small house in Fraser Town. I cycled to college on a hired bike until a room fell vacant in the hostel (now the Catholic Club) next to St Patrick's Church. There we had our own mess and chapel where, among other devotions, a fellow student, Bob Colaco, and I commenced a novena. It was a devotion we never completed, for each time we began the rosary, the imp got into us and started us

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laughing, until rather than continue the disrespect, we just gave up. (As if to make up for it, Bob became a Jesuit.) I had the barest of furniture - bed, desk, bookshelf, table-lamp and an old chest-of-drawers borrowed from my aunt. With one more table to take my portable hand-wound gramophone that Cyril had given to me in Assam, and my handful of 78s, Larry Adler and Charlie Kunz among them, I was quite happy. And happier still when my mother, who had grown tired of shifting between Doreen, Ralph and Pat and was pining for a home of her own, returned to Bangalore to make one with Win and me, all that was left of our once big family in Bangalore. Aunt Win's cottage proved too small for us, and as we could not find a suitable house at once, we had to settle for rooms, first in one place and then another.

The first was with Mrs. Galiffe, our friend from the days of my babyhood, now a widow but still living down the road from our old house on Curley Street. She had an Anglo-Indian housekeeper to help her, a lady chosen, like herself, from the Good Shepherd Convent which then still provided refuge for many a homeless girl. Though I was a bit cramped for a study, I soon settled down, happy to be in my familiar Richmond Town. To my joy and relief, my mother felt able at last to buy me a bicycle, so I was finally done with having to hire or borrow one. I was also able to order a second suit, a navy-blue pin-stripe, to supplement the one I had got in my last year in school. I was at an age when I was attracted by fine clothes, and believe I had begun to cultivate some taste in them. But though Commercial Street offered the finest in suits and shirts, my indulgence was limited mostly to ties and socks.

Memories of our time with Mrs. Galiffe include a happy Christmas party in 1937 attended by her only daughter Freda and her Scotsman husband, in from the UK. I still have snaps of all of us, my mother and Win included, wearing our party hats. Then there was the time that I had to wake up very early one morning to fetch a taxi (phones were a rarity in those days) to take my mother's cousin Flo Lines, who was temporarily staying with us, to Lady Curzon Hospital to have her baby. It was my first experience of a woman in labour,

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and we were happy to see her and her baby boy later that day. It was about then, too, that I saw something of my mother's close concern for her children's behaviour. A friend of mine, Herb Jaines, had agreed to look after his brother's house at St John's Hill for a night, and not wanting to stay alone, asked me to join him. Teenagers were not expected to spend the night out, so my mother questioned me carefully before she gave me permission to do so, and again the next day when I returned. Not that she distrusted her children in any way; in fact she was quite amused at my description of how we had made our own breakfast that morning. It was just that she was a wise and caring mother.

We left Mrs. Galiffe's rooms early in 1938 because we found we needed more space. We found new rooms at a boarding-house run by an elderly couple named Smythe which, in accordance with the vagaries of English names, they pronounced Smith. They owned a large house and compound at the corner of Wellington Street and Richmond Road, one of its walls being contiguous with the back of a mosque against which I practised my tennis when my wrist allowed. They also owned an old Ford convertible which their son, a real Billy Bunter who was naturally known as just Fatty at school, was now old enough to drive, and which they used to hire out. They had a parrot, a talkative African Grey, and a pair of Airedales which, we were told, never failed to come running to the parrot's whistle, an exact imitation of its master's, until they finally decided to call its bluff by sleeping under its cage. The Smythes gave us enough room for comfortable living and also good food served by an old bearer who, poor man, suffered from epilepsy. At one memorable meal I had to quickly rescue a large dish of cutlets he was carrying when he started to have one of his fits. The dining-room, with its fine old furniture of handsome rosewood, easily accommodated twelve persons, though we seldom had that many at the table. Some of the boarders were transients, and so gave us a chance of meeting some interesting people. Most of them were friendly, though there were inevitably some peculiar characters among them.

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In the room next to ours lived a middle-aged and taciturn Englishman with his fair and pretty young Creole wife who came from the Seychelles. Her English was passable but her mother-tongue, in which in all innocence I thought she could help me, was French. She agreed to do so when I asked her, so after lunch one afternoon, in the absence of others at the dining table, we sat together and went through a passage in my French text. The consequences that night were explosive. Her husband, no doubt seeing in me a tall and athletic young teenager seething with testosterone aroused by his attractive young wife, quite misconstrued the situation. He went out alone that evening and came home, obviously the worse for liquor, some time after my mother and I had gone to sleep. We were startled awake by the sound of him attacking our common door with a stout stick, ranting the while about "teaching that young sod a lesson" and demanding that I come out. I of course did no such thing, being too shocked and scared even to answer back. We could hear his wife crying and pleading with him to stop and come away, but to no avail, until Mrs. Smythe, whom she let into their room, talked to him and managed to calm him down. It was my first (and last) experience of being challenged by an irate husband, and one not easily forgotten. They came to breakfast the next morning, she somewhat red-eyed, he silent and wooden-faced. He offered no apology, which was left to Mrs. Smythe to do later. She must have given them notice, for they left soon after. Thenceforward, I saw to it that my tutors were all regular academics - and male.

Two other boarders were of different interest and caused us much milder perturbation. They were European members of a team of wrestlers touring the country with their Indian counterparts and drawing substantial crowds to their nightly bouts at eight annas a ticket. I attended two or three of their shows - the right word, for their contests were clearly put-up jobs, profitable mixtures of skill, strength and pretence. I forget the names of the two who stayed with us, but one was a blond bear of a man, a rough and exuberant Russian, fat and flabby, and the other a taciturn and sun-burnt Greek, all firm and well-defined muscle. They both ate enormously and would certainly have put a landlady less shrewd than Mrs. Smythe

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out of pocket, but as it was, she appeared content to keep them, except for the time when she rented her car to the Russian who wanted a night out on the town on one of his evenings off. Her Anglo-Indian driver seems to have had a rough time of it, for on his return in the early hours of the morning I heard him tell her in a loud and distraught voice, "On my Gord, Madam, I'll never take a man like him out again"! It was the same wrestler with whom Win had a slight set-to while they were serving themselves from a side-table at lunch one day. He must have made some rude approach, for we suddenly saw her trying to slap his face while he defended himself. I was trying to work up enough courage to intervene, but was saved by a sharp word from the Greek, which brought the other back to his seat at the table.

But such episodes were just small if memorable incidents at a time that for the most part went by agreeably. My routine was as even as I could have wished: college in the mornings and afternoons, each session preceded by a chat with classmates before the bell rang, with an hour's break to cycle home for lunch; evenings given to "nets" or the track or to diminishing spells at the tennis court, which Joyce used to attend as well; visiting her later at her aunt's house opposite Mango Dell Park, with Fr Joe Pires giving us a knowing smile as he passed by the gate and saw us together on the garden bench (the park remains but the house has gone, its place taken by a large block of flats); some study before dinner, and long into the night at examination time; week-end cricket or an occasional picnic or just joining the gang for talk and laughter at Parr's place on Old Madras Bank Road, sadly now demolished; and the regular Saturday movie and mass the next day followed by a special lunch and a sound afternoon sleep, the last becoming a life-long and beneficial Sunday habit.

I said my first good-bye to Joyce in December 1937, when she and her brothers went to spend Christmas with their father in the districts. There I wrote her my first love-letter, and I remember the thrill with which I opened her reply. There were not to be too many such exchanges, for we had remarkably few separations in the years

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thereafter. The saddest was certainly the first following our marriage in 1945, when, less than a week after our wedding in Bangalore, we arrived in Calcutta. Reporting at HQ, Eastern Command, Barrackpore, for duty with security intelligence, I was told I had to go up-country at once. It was to a non-family area, and Joyce had tears in her eyes when I gave her the news, but fortunately the separation did not last long. For thanks to a kindly Colonel who, hearing we were newly married, stretched the rule and declared as a "family station" the vacant village house I managed to find, we were able to start our life happily together.

In the meantime my mother, still anxious to have a place of her own which she and her children could again look on as home, found a house further up Richmond Road. "Mumtaz Mahal", whose earlier name I remember was "Dil Kush" (Heart's Pleasure), was next door to Baldwin Girls. It was a single-storeyed building with a long frontage set well back from the road, its two gates far apart and its front wall lined by shady fig trees. It was a stylish residence with a porch served by a driveway that enclosed a large lawn. At the time we moved in it was partitioned so as to take three families. Ours was the larger, middle portion which came with an outdoor kitchen and servant's room. It had modern sanitation, a convenience that by then had been extended throughout Bangalore, a full-length bath-tub which I was not in the habit of using, preferring to use the shower, and an early type of geyser worked by a copper switch that gave out a brilliant blue-green flash when the handle was pulled to put it off. On our right lived the Kings, another family who were taking advantage of Bangalore's schools while the father, a Madras forest officer, served in the districts. The third portion was sometimes vacant, but when war broke out, the army took it over as quarters for married officers. It was the thin end of the wedge, for soon the whole building was commandeered by the military and we had to shift again, this time to what was to be my mother's last home. But by then I had left to study at Madras.

On my last return to India in 1989, I went past "Mumtaz Mahal" and was sad to see the change. In the years immediately after the

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war, Bangalore's many attractions and amenities had caused an explosion in its population, putting an end to spacious living in the Garden City I had known. Trade and industry rapidly grew, giving rise to ugly blocks of flats and offices that supplanted the gracious bungalows and gardens that were once our pride. Many were built with black money, often in flagrant disregard of building regulations, usually with the connivance of corrupt state and local administrations, one of the sad accompaniments of Indian independence. "Mumtaz Mahal" had not been spared. When I saw it, the fig trees had gone, a massive, ugly office-block occupied the front lawn, and the old house was being knocked down to make room for a similar block behind.

While we were still at "Mumtaz Mahal" my mother went to Calcutta early in 1938 for Pat's wedding. He and Ruth had become engaged during our memorable Assam winter keddah, but had had to wait for Cyril to pass out of the IMA and for his finances to improve. It was to be a very short marriage, for Ruth, unnecessarily perhaps, decided to go to England where her parents had earlier migrated, to be with them for the birth of her baby. It was a girl whom they named Pamela, but Pat was never to see her, for Ruth took the fatal decision to come out by sea in 1943, despite the danger of U-boats. They made it safely as far as South Africa, but there their ship was torpedoed off the Cape and both Ruth and the little girl were drowned. For Pat, who had waited so long before marrying, losing his wife so early and never seeing the only child he was ever to have were the greatest and saddest of tragedies.

Win was teaching in Delhi at the time my mother was away for Pat's marriage, but I was not left alone, for by then Nan had come to make her home with us, this time for good. None of us had forgotten her generosity in helping to pay Cyril's fee for a term at the Academy. He had recently graduated and had offered to start repaying her even while doing his year's attachment with the West Kents at Lucknow. (This posting with a British battalion was a compulsory part of his initiation to regimental life before he joined his regular Indian battalion, then at Bannu on the Frontier.) Nan had

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refused his offer, but even without such generosity on her part, she would have been more than welcome to join the family, as she always had been. I gained by her presence, for she freed me for my own pursuits by running the house and helped me to organise a large party for all my friends at the time of Pat's wedding.

Around the corner from "Mumtaz Mahal" was Hayes Road where my mother's cousin Charles Davies and his wife Iris lived. He had retired from the IMD a few years earlier after specialising in ophthalmology and serving for long on the civil side. He was clearly a highly intelligent person whose sharp mind and entertaining conversation I still recall with pleasure, and I could well understand his early frustration at having been thrust into a subordinate service to work as a Warrant Officer under British army doctors who in some cases were certainly less competent than he. Unfortunately, he had the unamiable trait of many an Anglo-Indian of his generation of looking down on other Indians, and I remember once being shocked to hear him say, "An Indian as an Indian is bad enough; make him a Christian and he's ten times worse". (I might have thought this less obnoxious had I known that, years later, I was to hear one of my superiors, a Maharashtrian Brahmin of the caste that produced Mahatma Gandhi's assassin, say to me in disgust at the endemic venality of our politicians, "You know, Stracey, all this only goes to show what a third-rate people we Indians are".)

His wife kept a proud home which included a butler who had to wear white gloves when serving at table. And cranky though she was, especially about money which caused her to make her husband account for every anna he spent, we remember her most kindly for the gift she left us in her Will. It was a carved wooden lamp-stand of a Korean fisherman carrying his catch on his shoulder, the weave of his basket, the scales of the fish, and even the hair of his beard all most skillfully brought out. Living so close to them was a great convenience, for when the war started and we found ourselves without a radio, we were able to stroll over to their house after dinner every night to listen to the latest BBC news on theirs. (Predictably,

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the second-hand radio we got at an auction for just that purpose never worked satisfactorily.)

It was in 1940 that I first met my brother Ralph's wife May, the English girl he had married in London. She came south from Bengal to visit us, and seemed a pleasant and lively person who fitted in well with the family. She gave no indication that anything was amiss with their marriage, and on her return to Bengal she had a second child, Justin, in 1941. Their marriage later ended in divorce, and May and the boy returned to England after the war, giving Patricia (now Suzanne), who had been sent "home" ten years earlier, a chance to meet her new brother and the mother she hardly knew. After that we thought we had lost touch with them for good, but Justin, his wife Elizabeth and their two young sons Ben and Thomas made a fairy-tale reunion with the family at Bangalore in 1983, since when we have kept up a close correspondence. My only regret is that I am now unable to join them in their search of the India Office archives for the English side of our ancestry. They have turned up some interesting clues, but not enough to discern any credible connections.

Soon after May returned to Bengal we had to move house again. The army requisitioned the whole of "Mumtaz Mahal" in 1940, but my mother was lucky enough to find another place at short notice. It was a large but slightly dilapidated building on St Mark's Road, a block away from South Parade, that had served as an army mess many years before. Its compound stretched all the way from Museum Road, which the house had originally faced, to St Mark's Road, which was its new address. It was a rabbit-warren of rooms and outhouses, now partitioned so as to accommodate four families. In the central portion lived an old lady, Mrs. Marshall, and her daughter Mrs. Gibbs, a widow who worked in the GPO. An elder daughter had been the late revered and much-feared Mother Divine Heart of the Good Shepherd Convent, through whose hands all three of my sisters had passed and who, from all accounts, had given them good reason to remember her. Another portion was occupied by my sister Margaret and her husband Charles who, regrettably having little else to do, became pillars of the Bowring Institute opposite. My

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mother and I occupied the remaining third of the main house in which, fortunately, there was room enough for an extra bed or two, for including Nan, who was now living permanently with us, we were still a family whose members came and went. A separate building of two rooms, converted from the remains of outhouses that once backed on to St Mark's Road, was occupied by an elderly Italian lady who had obviously seen better times. Rosa Clarke was a widow whose maiden name we never discovered. She spoke good English, but with a heavy accent, and was definitely not one of those silly Anglo-Indians who, relying on an olive complexion, tried to pass as southern European. Though she depended on friends for much of her food and clothes, she always emerged for her evening excursion to the Bowring stylishly dressed, well coiffured and wearing a monocle. My wife's father used to help her occasionally, and it was always amusing to hear him tell how, on receiving his gift, she would promptly thank St Philomena (since decanonised), while invariably forgetting to thank him!

We did our Intermediate finals in March 1939, but had to wait longer than usual for our results to be declared. This was because of an inquiry the University had to make into a serious case of tampering with some of our answer papers. Even as we sat for our examinations there was a strong rumour that a particular student had had advance information of the questions in one of the maths papers. The actuality was different, but nevertheless could have had serious personal consequences for some of us. When I was summoned to Madras by a committee that was examining the matter and shown my papers in English, it was only to discover that whole pages had been torn out, actually leaving an answer ending in the middle of a sentence. To whose gain still remains a mystery. We were closely questioned about what we knew, but apart from the rumours we had heard, we could throw no light on the affair. We feared for our results, but the examiners must have been instructed to give us marks appropriate to our performance as it appeared in the untampered portion of our papers. For regardless of the fact that about a fifth of one of my papers was missing, I got an overall first. This, combined

Growing up in Anglo-India

with my good all-round record in previous years, ensured my easy entry to a college of my choice at Madras.